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ADVENTURES IN THE
MYSTWOOD
by John Arthur Williams
J. Arthur Williams 86

This book is dedicated to: Barbara, Mel, Gus, Gwen, "The Bugs," Kirstin, and Steve without whose patience and support it would not be.

Special thanks to *Mike Autrey*

***ADVENTURES IN THE MYSTWOOD* #1, August 1986.** Published by BLACKTHORNE PUBLISHING, INC., 786 Blackthorne Avenue, El Cajon, California 92020, U.S.A. Telephone (619) 463-9603. Publishers, *Steve Schanes* and *Ann E. Fera.* Production Coordinator, *Paul Tallerday.* Production Manager, *Lynn Cobb.* Circulation Manger, *Ann E. Fera.* Marketing and Promotions, *Cliff MacGillivray. Adventures in the Mystwood* ©1986 John A. Williams. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or part without the specific written permission of the publisher and copyright holder(s). No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions is intended and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Published bi-monthly. Printed in the U.S.A. Character licensing inquiries should be directed to Steve Schanes. *For character licensing information contact Steve Schanes*

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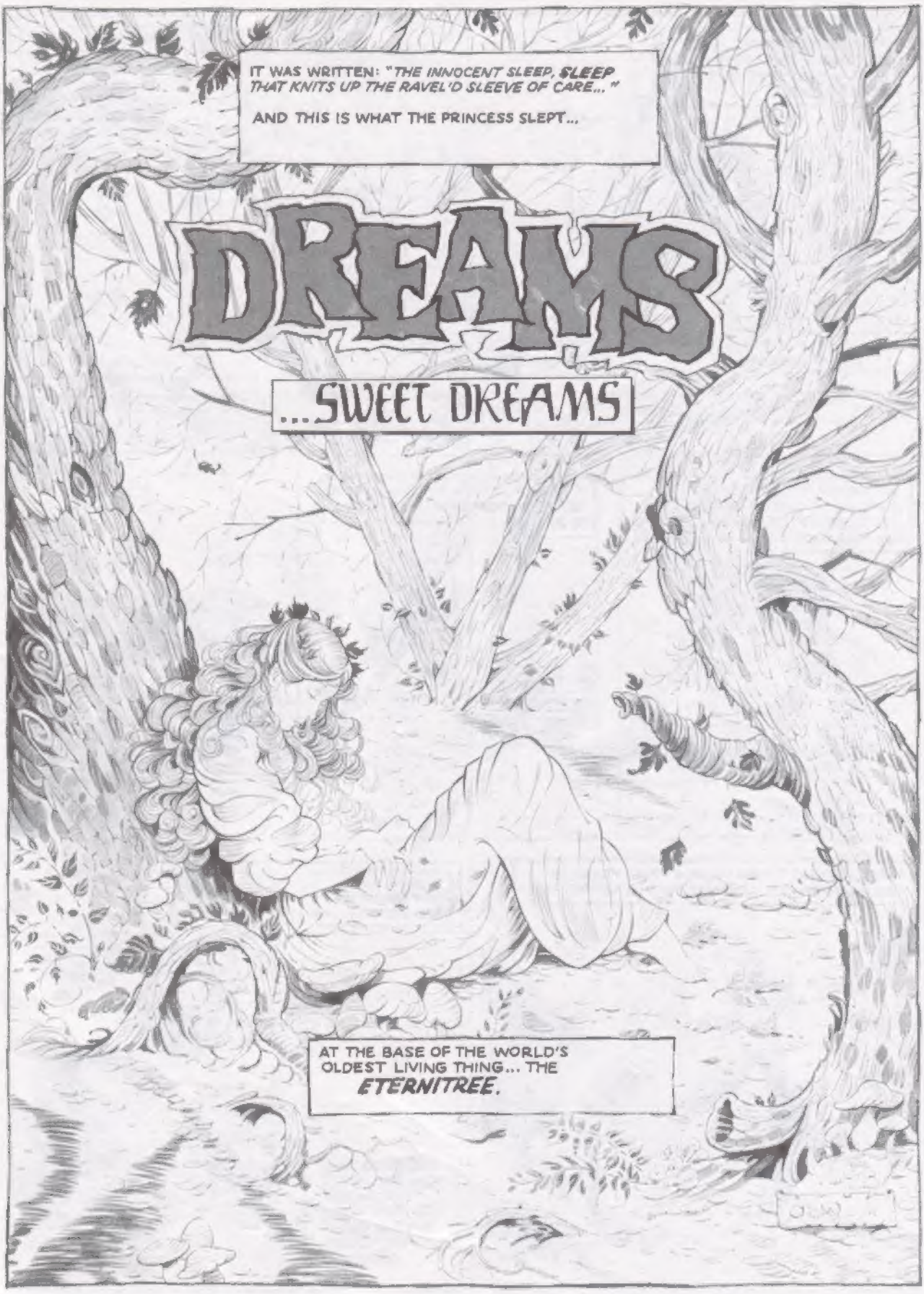

IT WAS WRITTEN: "THE INNOCENT SLEEP, SLEEP THAT KNITS UP THE RAVEL'D SLEEVE OF CARE..."
AND THIS IS WHAT THE PRINCESS SLEPT...
DREAMS
...SWEET DREAMS
AT THE BASE OF THE WORLD'S OLDEST LIVING THING... THE ETERNITREE.

TINY EYES OBSERVE HER... BUT SHE IS SAFE NOW AND NOT ALONE -- SHE IS IN THE MYSTWOOD.
ORPHANED IN A WAR BETWEEN RIVAL KINGDOMS... THE VISION OF HER PARENTS' DEATH WAS FRESH IN HER THOUGHTS.
A TERRIBLE WAR THAT DESTROYED HER KINGDOM... AND HER PRINCE TO BE.
A WELL-INTENTIONED COUPLE THAT YEARNED FOR A DAUGHTER OF THEIR OWN ADOPTED HER.
... BUT, ALAS... HER GRIEF WAS TOO GREAT...

...AND WHEN ZARA FAILED TO RETURN FROM ONE OF HER DAILY WALKS IN THE WOODS, THE PARENTS WERE SADDENED, BUT NOT SURPRISED.
"A WONDERFUL STREAM IS THE RIVER OF TIME... YET ITS SOOTHING WATERS HEAL SO SLOWLY.
AND SO SLEPT ZARA.
HOW LONG SHE SLEPT, SHE DID NOT KNOW... ONLY THAT SHE WOKE WITH A PEACE UN-COMMON.

...ONLY TO SEE A DEER VANISH BEFORE HER EYES!
AMAZED,.. SHE WATCHES AS SQUIRRELS CHASE EACH OTHER OVER A SEEMINGLY INVISIBLE BARRIER...
AM I STILL DREAMING?
FOR THE BRIEFEST INSTANT, SHE GATHERS HER COURAGE AND PUTS HER HAND OVER THE BARRIER...
OH DEAR... I WONDER WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I...

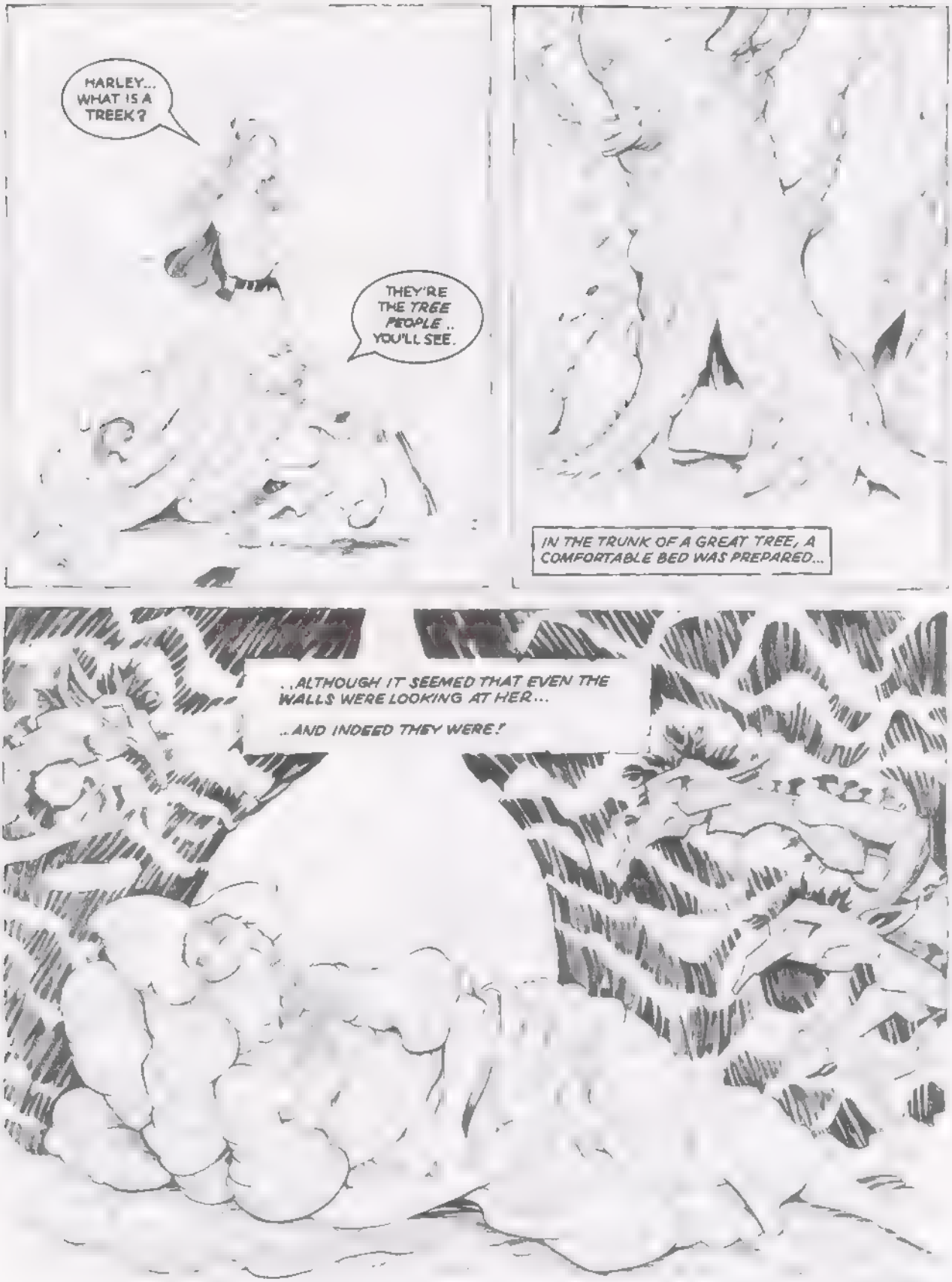
HUH?
DON'T EVEN THINK IT!
WHO... WHO ARE YOU?
HARLEY W. HOCKADAY... DWELF...
AND IF YOU'VE GOT A LICK OF SENSE, YOU'LL STEP BACK FROM THAT!
JUST WHAT IS... THAT?
THAT IS A TIME TEAR... IT LEADS TO SOMEWHEN.
AND THAT IS SOMEWHERE YOU'RE NOT READY TO GO... COME WITH ME!

"CREPUSCULUS* WILL EXPLAIN ALL OF THIS TO YOU."
*SEE GLOSSARY.

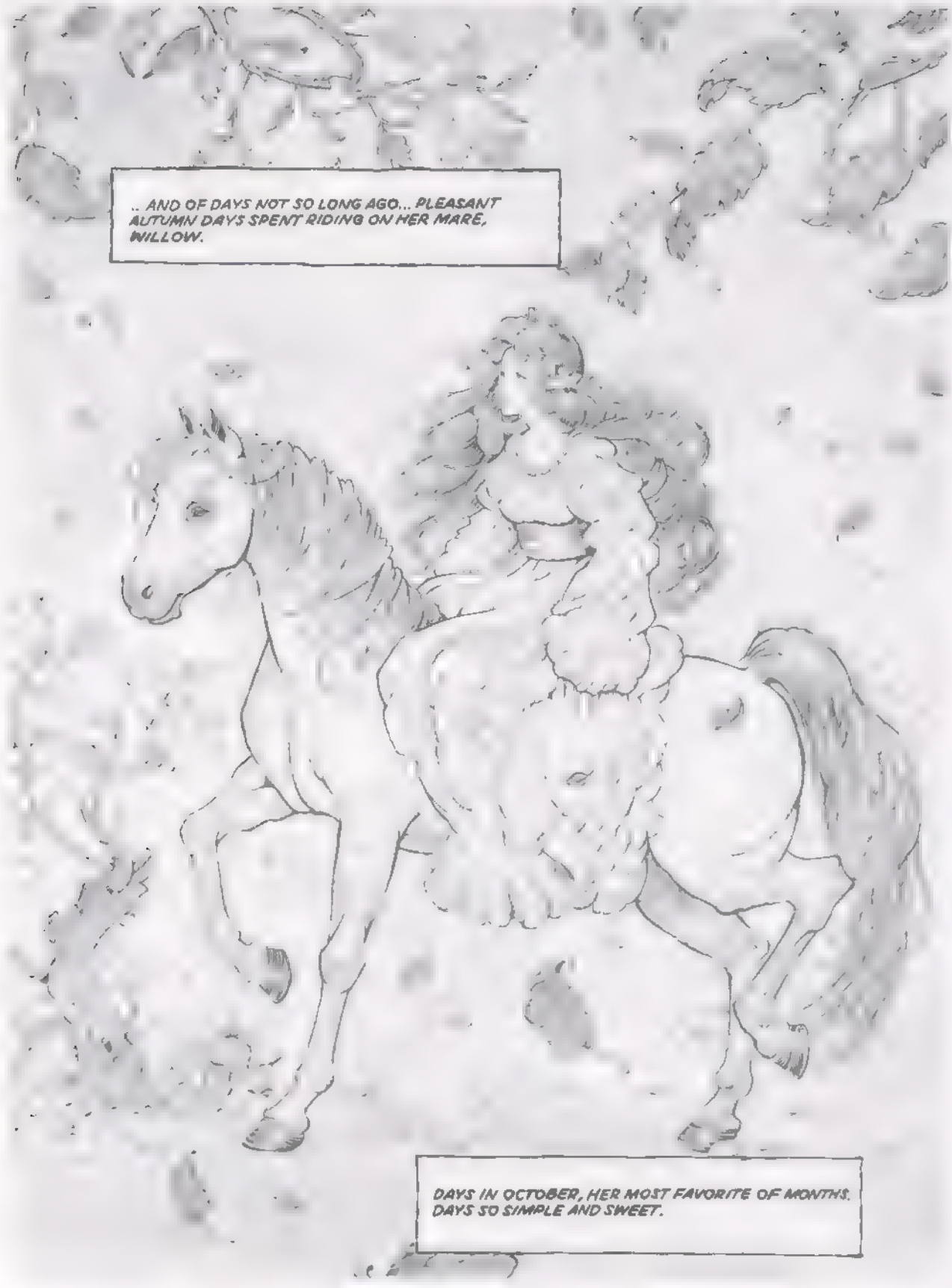
SOON, THEY STOOD BEFORE A STRANGE LITTLE HOUSE...
FROM WHICH AN ODD BUT NOT UNPLEASANT MUSIC FLOWED.

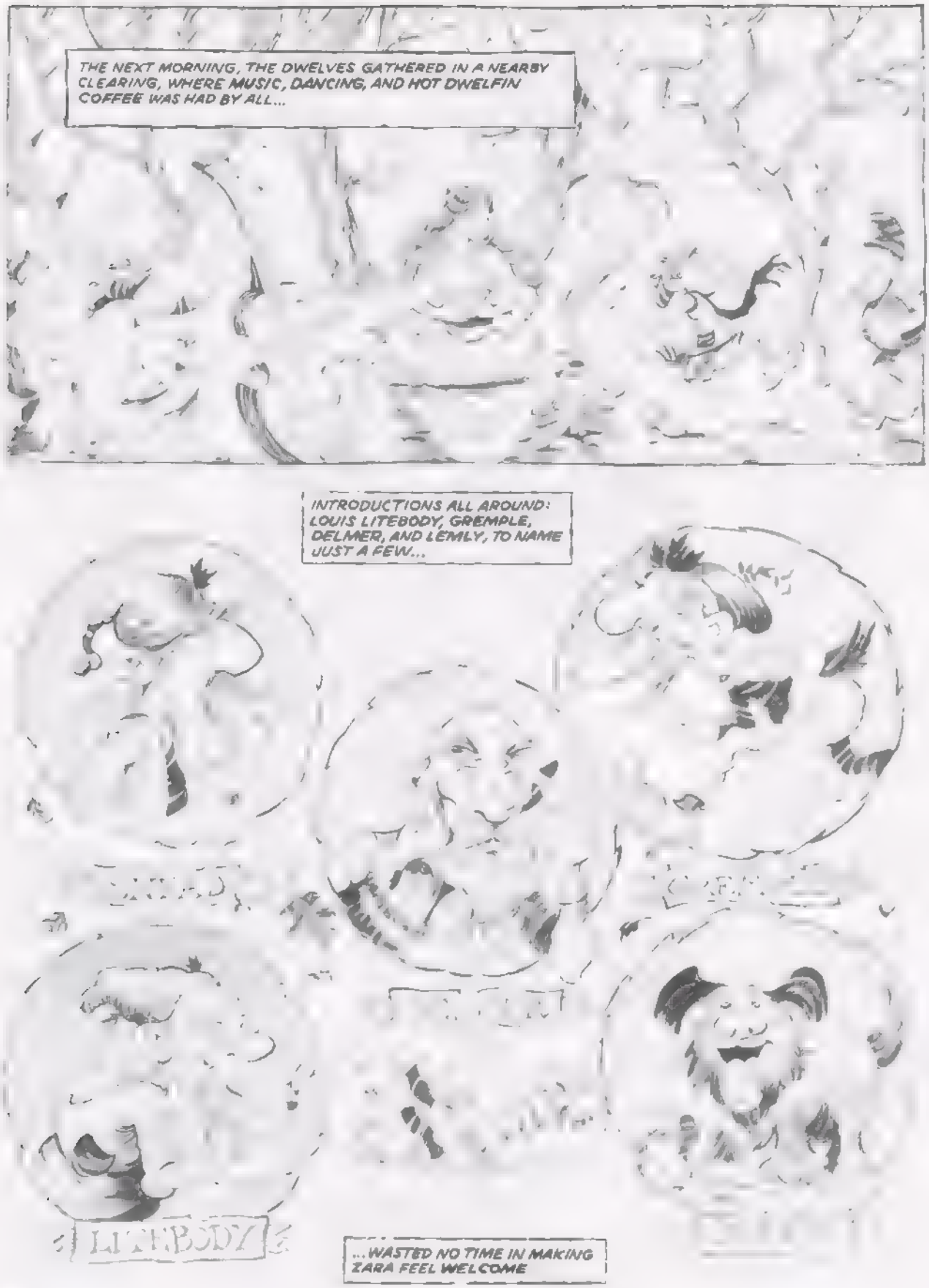
MAG'IC--ANY MYSTERIOUS, SEEMINGLY INEXPLICABLE OR EXTRAORDINARY POWER OR INFLUENCE...
THIS IS THE MAGIC THAT ZARA FELT AS SHE STOOD BEFORE THIS QUAINT LITTLE MAN

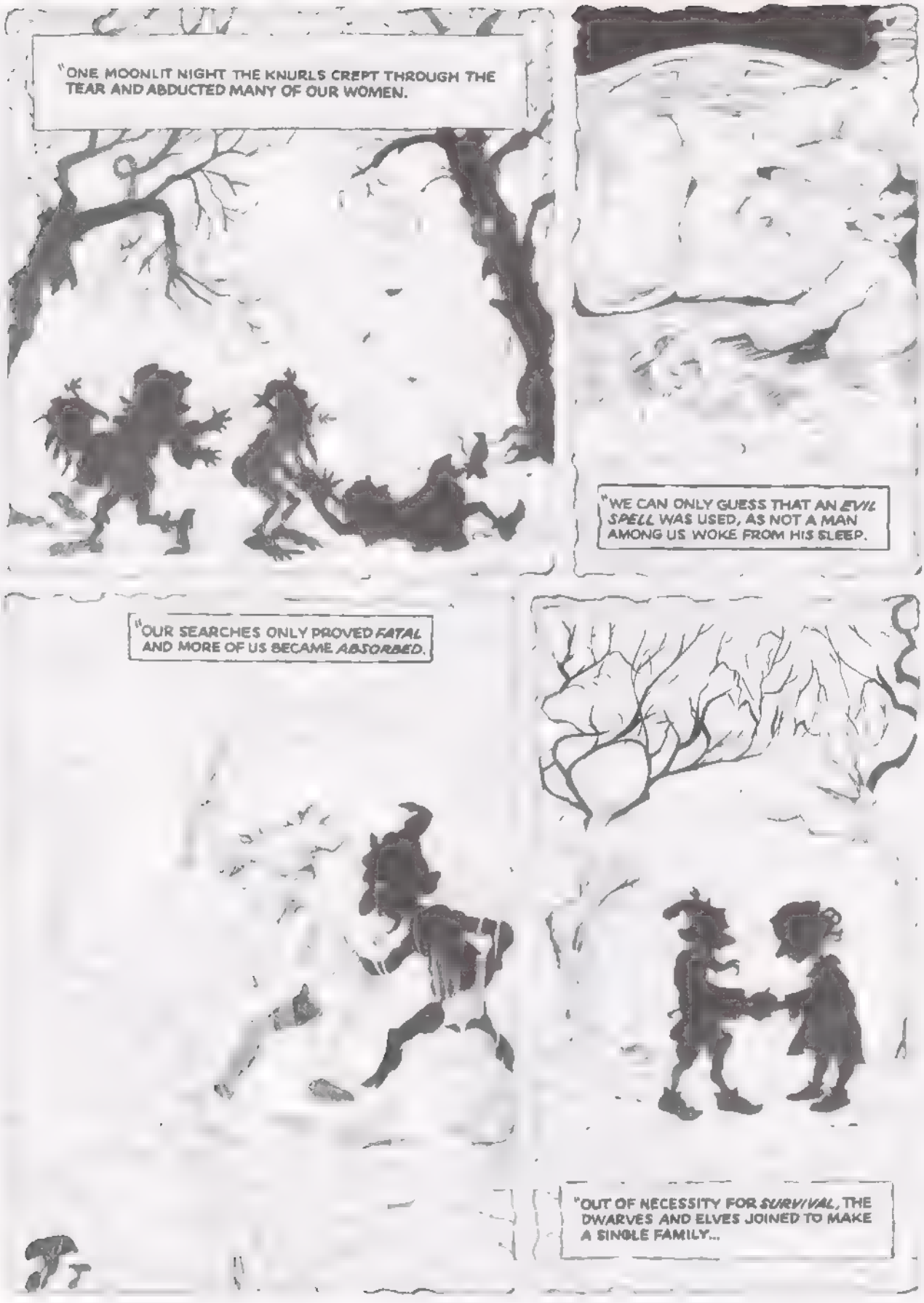
SO, MUCH AGAINST HER WISHES, ZARA BADE FAREWELL TO THE VERY KIND CREPUSCULUS, AND FOLLOWED HARLEY BACK INTO THE WOODS, QUESTIONING HIM ALL THE WAY.

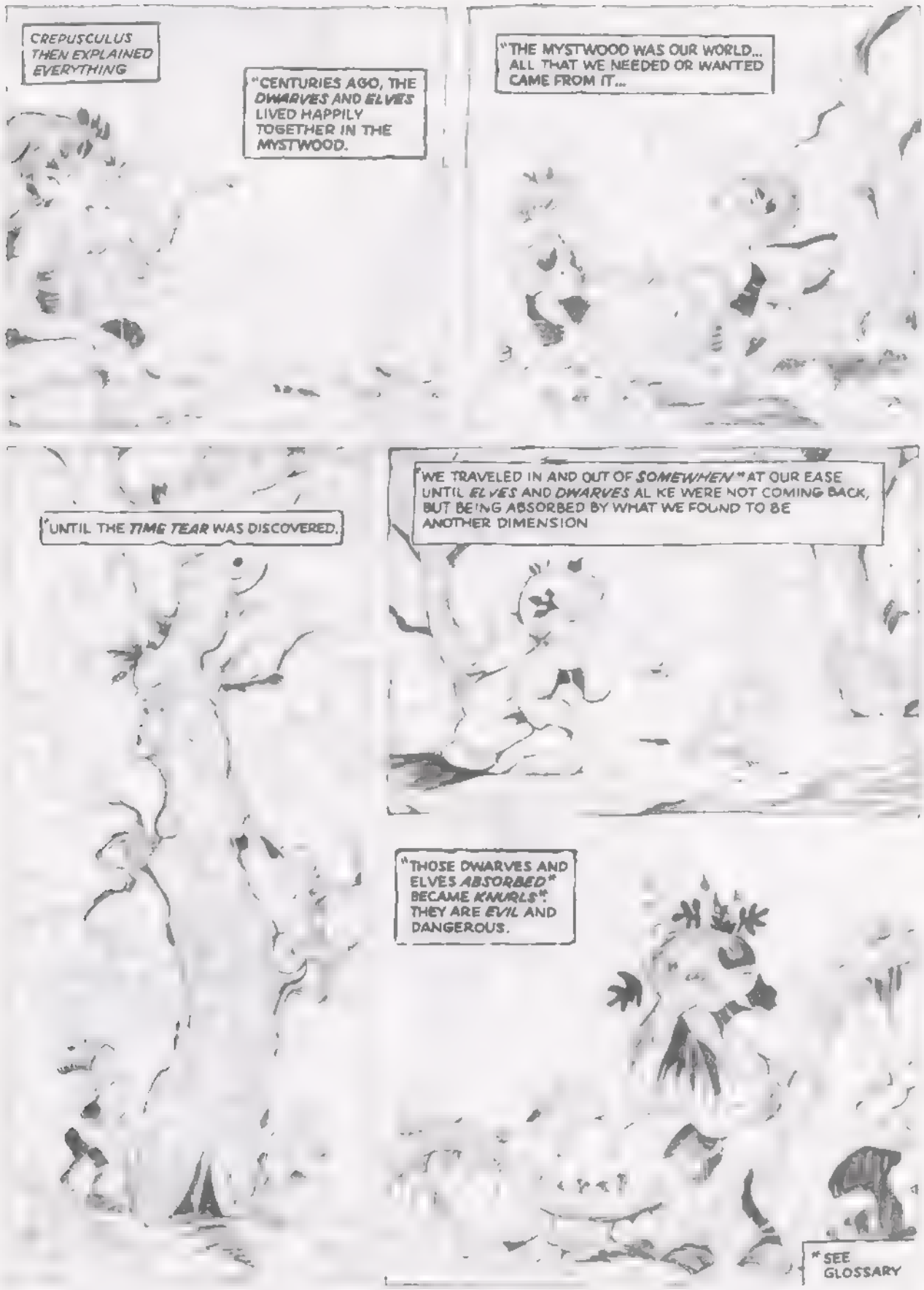

HARLEY... WHAT IS A TREEK?
THEY'RE THE TREE PEOPLE .. YOU'LL SEE.
IN THE TRUNK OF A GREAT TREE, A COMFORTABLE BED WAS PREPARED...
..ALTHOUGH IT SEEMED THAT EVEN THE WALLS WERE LOOKING AT HER...
..AND INDEED THEY WERE!

WHO. WHO. WHAT ARE YOU ?
I KNEW THEY COULDN'T KEEP TO THEMSELVES.. A CURIOUS LOT THESE TREEKS OH . YOU'VE SEEN HER.. NOW, OFF WITH YOU.!
SHOO.! SHOO.!
WHEN SLEEP FINALLY CAME TO ZARA, HER DREAMS WERE FILLED WITH VISIONS OF DWELVES, TREEKS, AND OTHER WONDERS OF THE MYSTWOOD...

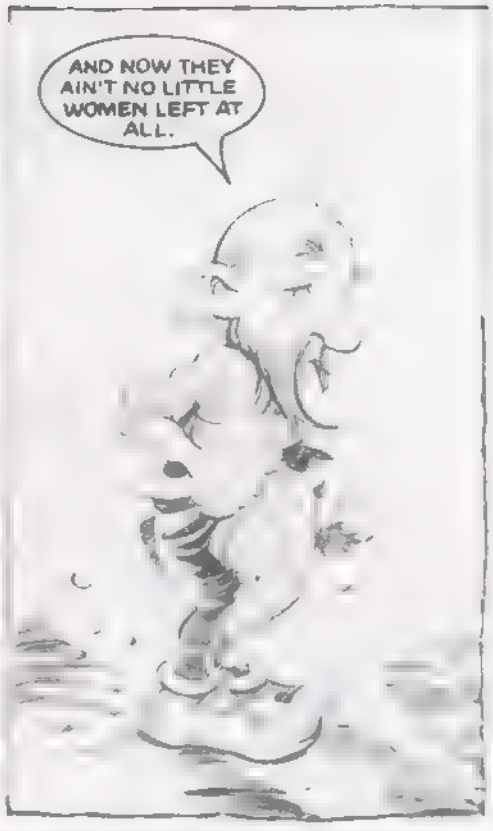

.. AND OF DAYS NOT SO LONG AGO... PLEASANT AUTUMN DAYS SPENT RIDING ON HER MARE, WILLOW.
DAYS IN OCTOBER, HER MOST FAVORITE OF MONTHS. DAYS SO SIMPLE AND SWEET.

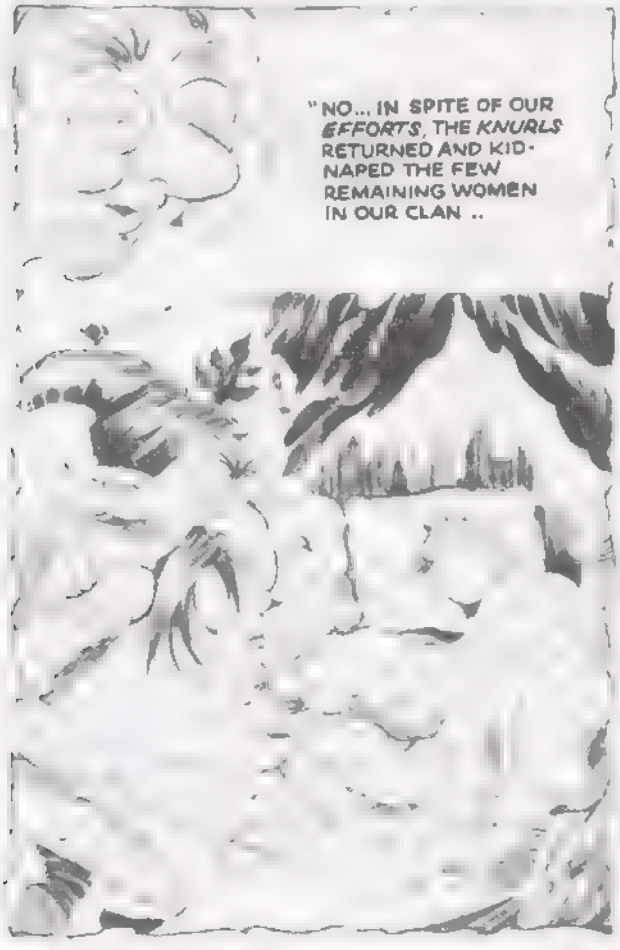

THE NEXT MORNING, THE DWELVES GATHERED IN A NEARBY CLEARING, WHERE MUSIC, DANCING, AND HOT DWELFIN COFFEE WAS HAD BY ALL...
INTRODUCTIONS ALL AROUND: LOUIS LITEBODY, GREMPLE, DELMER, AND LEMLY, TO NAME JUST A FEW...
LITEBODY
...WASTED NO TIME IN MAKING ZARA FEEL WELCOME

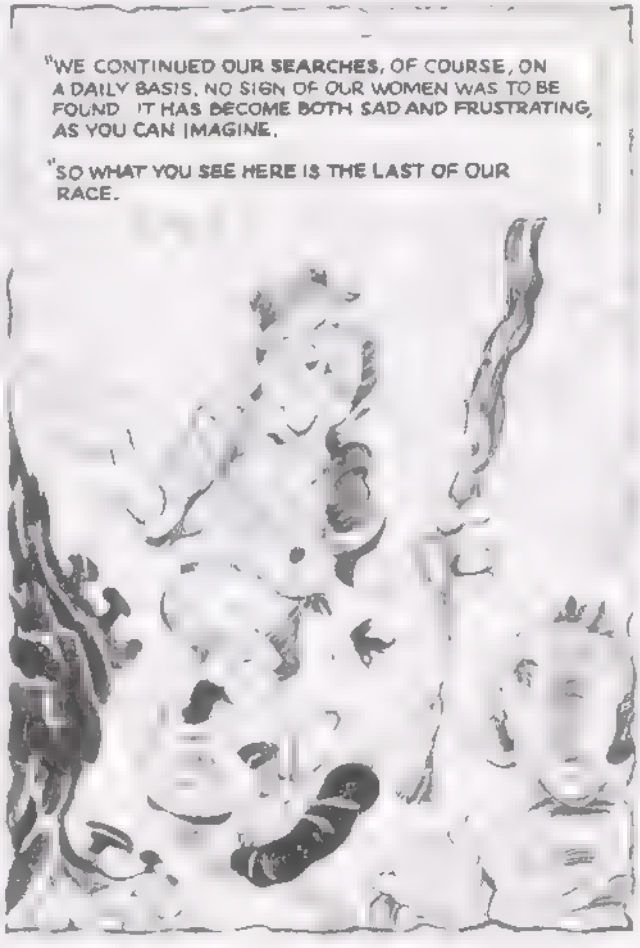

"ONE MOONLIT NIGHT THE KNURLS CREPT THROUGH THE TEAR AND ABDUCTED MANY OF OUR WOMEN.
"WE CAN ONLY GUESS THAT AN *EVIL SPELL* WAS USED, AS NOT A MAN AMONG US WOKE FROM HIS SLEEP.
"OUR SEARCHES ONLY PROVED *FATAL* AND MORE OF US BECAME *ABSORBED*.
"OUT OF NECESSITY FOR *SURVIVAL*, THE DWARVES AND ELVES JOINED TO MAKE A SINGLE FAMILY...


CREPUSCULUS THEN EXPLAINED EVERYTHING
"CENTURIES AGO, THE *DWARVES* AND *ELVES* LIVED HAPPILY TOGETHER IN THE MYSTWOOD.
"THE MYSTWOOD WAS OUR WORLD... ALL THAT WE NEEDED OR WANTED CAME FROM IT...
"UNTIL THE *TIME TEAR* WAS DISCOVERED.
"WE TRAVELED IN AND OUT OF *SOMEWHEN*" AT OUR EASE UNTIL *ELVES* AND *DWARVES* AL KE WERE NOT COMING BACK, BUT BE'NG ABSORBED BY WHAT WE FOUND TO BE ANOTHER DIMENSION
"THOSE DWARVES AND ELVES *ABSORBED*" BECAME *KNURLS*". THEY ARE *EVIL* AND DANGEROUS.
" SEE GLOSSARY

THE CHILDREN OF THIS FAMILY WERE CALLED *DWELVES*. WE ARE THOSE CHILDREN... AND ALL THAT ARE LEFT.

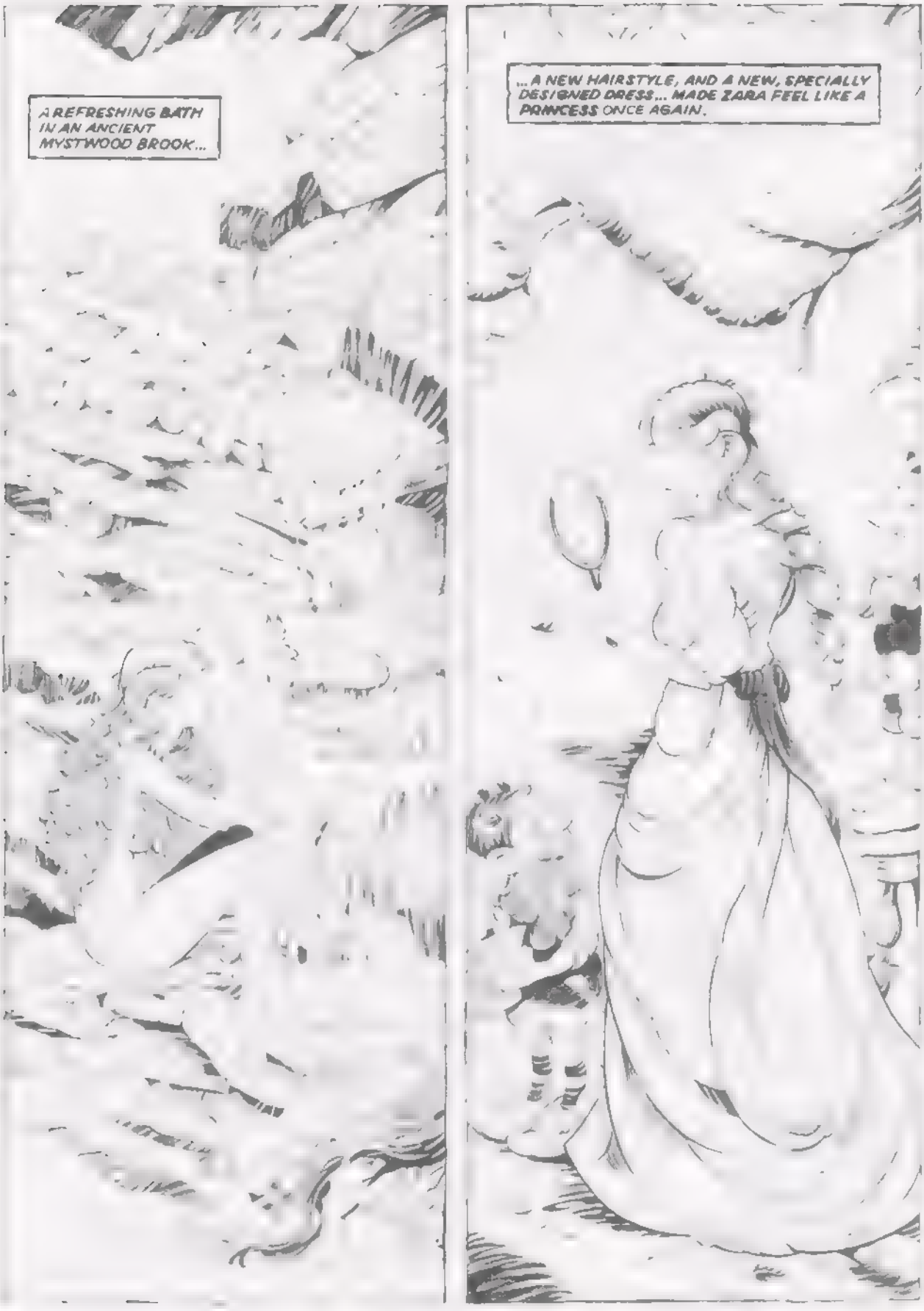

AND NOW THEY AIN'T NO LITTLE WOMEN LEFT AT ALL.


"NO... IN SPITE OF OUR *EFFORTS*, THE *KNURLS* RETURNED AND KIDNAPED THE FEW REMAINING WOMEN IN OUR CLAN ..


"WE CONTINUED OUR SEARCHES, OF COURSE, ON A DAILY BASIS. NO SIGN OF OUR WOMEN WAS TO BE FOUND IT HAS BECOME BOTH SAD AND FRUSTRATING, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE.
"SO WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS THE LAST OF OUR RACE.

"WE HAVE LEARNED MUCH, HOWEVER, AND CAN TRAVEL TO SOMEWHEN WITHOUT BEING ABSORBED OR STOLEN.
BUT ALL OF US MUST WEAR THIS. IT IS AN EARTHPOUCH. IT CONTAINS A BIT OF BARK FROM THE ETERNITREE AND SOIL FROM THE MYSTWOOD.
ZARA OBSERVES THE POUCH WITH WONDER.
YOU MUST WEAR IT AGAINST YOUR SKIN/ SEE... WE ALL HAVE THEM.
"THE HEART IS WISER THAN THE INTELLECT " WAS IT TIME FOR ZARA TO RELY ON HER HEART ?

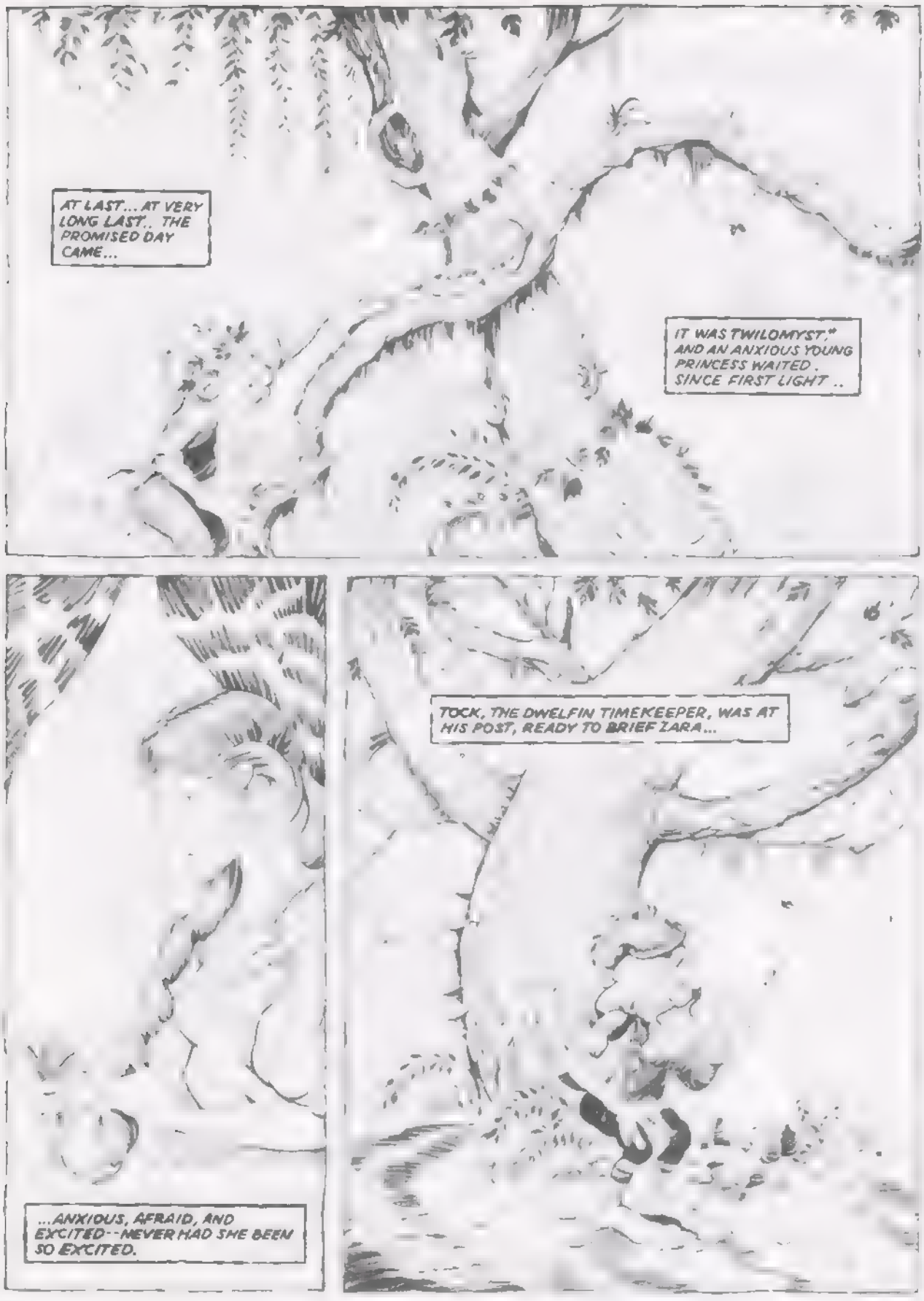
SQUINTING AT A FRESH PIECE OF SHAVED BARK AND HANDSOMELY DRESSED IN A CEREMONIAL COSTUME, LITEBODY ADDRESSED THE GATHERING:
WE HAVE VOTED, AND EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE HUMAN... WE FIND YOU PLEASANT... (AND PRETTY)...
.. AND WOULD LIKE YOU TO STAY WITH US.. IF YOU WISH...
ZARA WAS SO MOVED BY THE OFFER OF HER NEW FRIENDS THAT A NOD WAS HER ONLY RESPONSE.

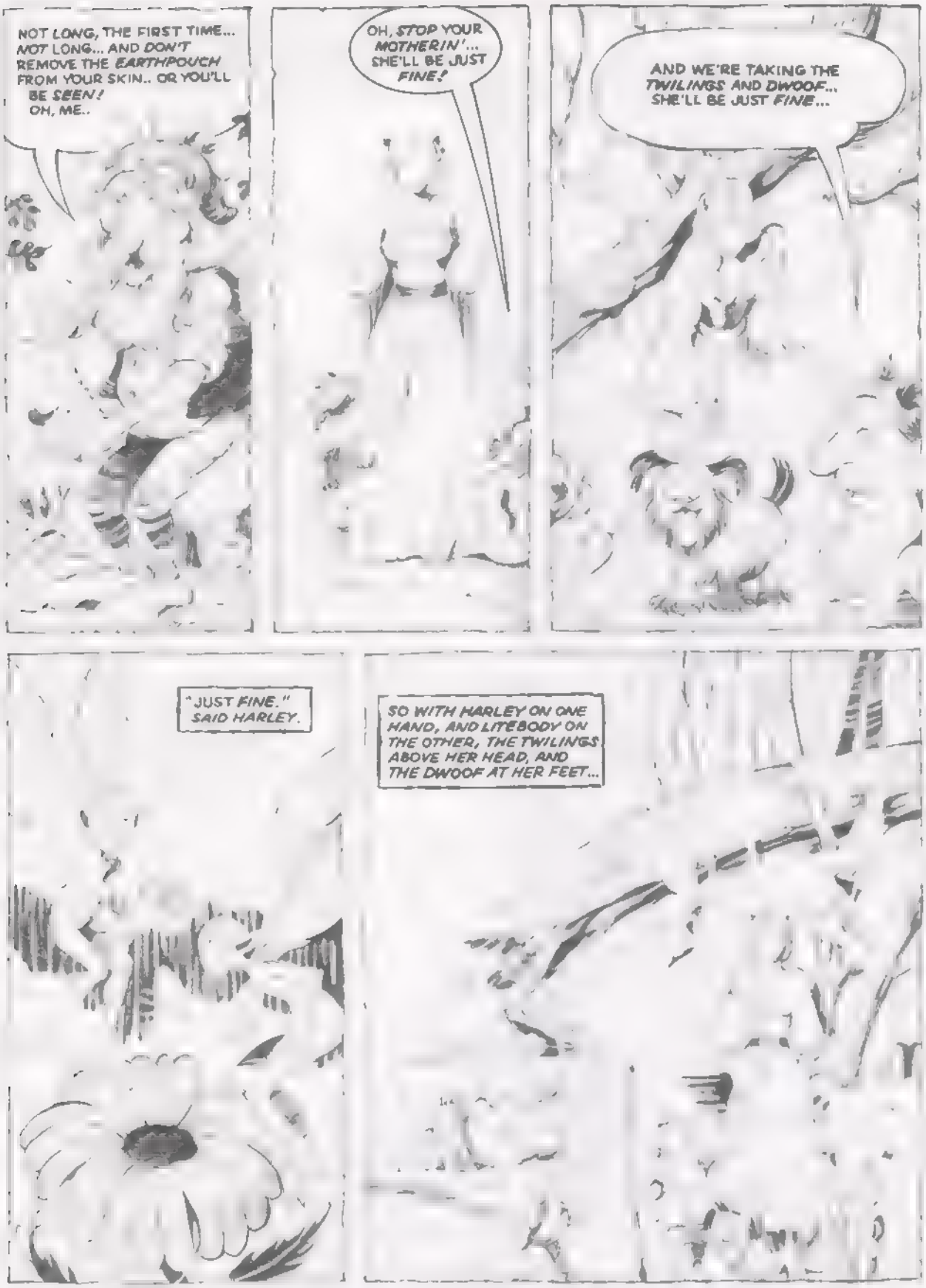

A REFRESHING BATH IN AN ANCIENT MYSTWOOD BROOK...
...A NEW HAIRSTYLE, AND A NEW, SPECIALLY DESIGNED DRESS... MADE ZARA FEEL LIKE A PRINCESS ONCE AGAIN.

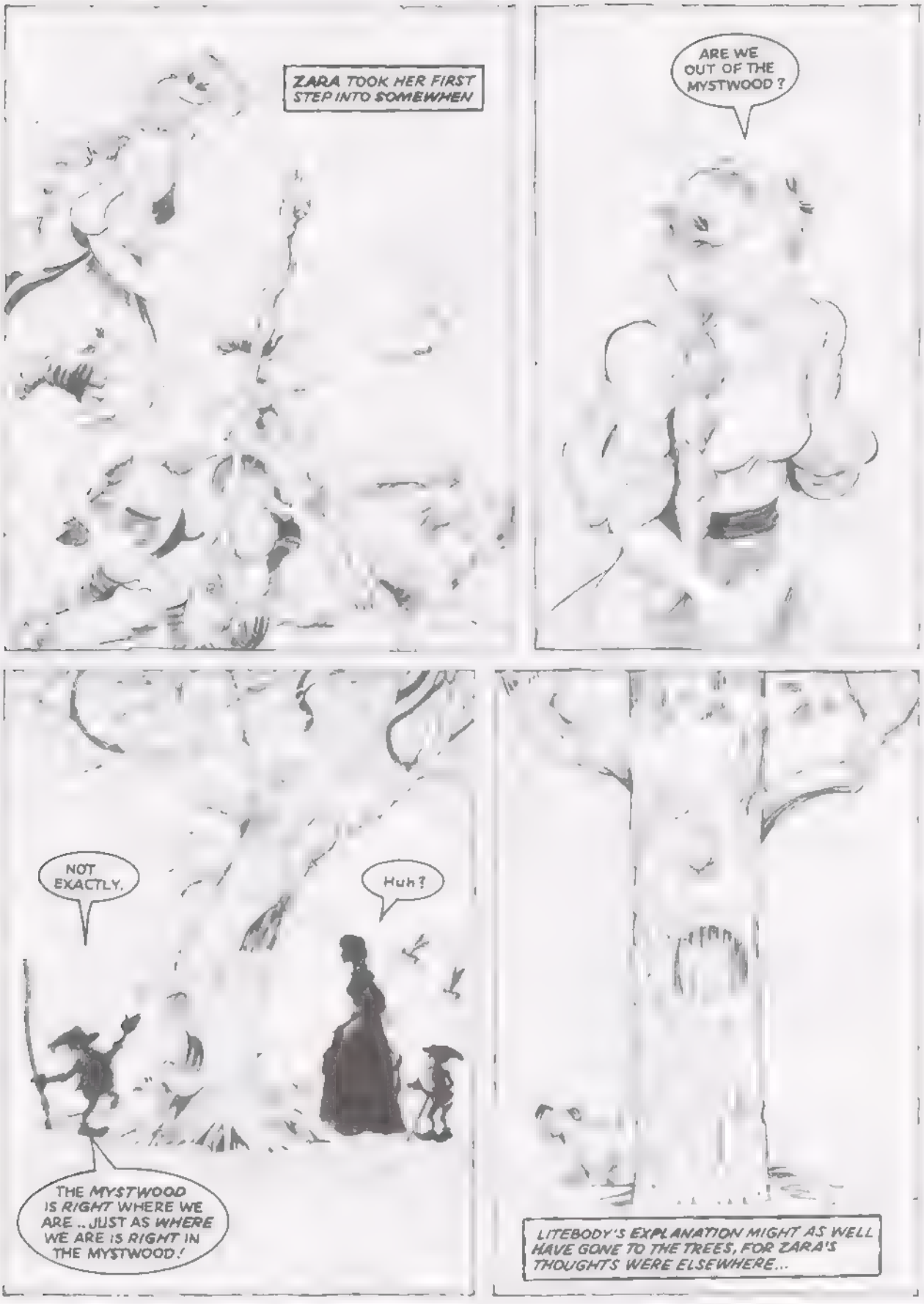
THE NEXT MORNING FOUND ZARA AND LITEBODY ON A MYSTROOM-PICKING EXPEDITION. ZARA, EVER FULL OF QUESTIONS FOR THE GRUMPY BUT LOVABLE LITEBODY...
BUT WHY DO THE KNURLS WANT TO TAKE ONLY THE WOMEN, AND WHERE DO THEY GO WHEN...?
DAD-GUMM IT, GIRL! I DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS! IF I DID, WELL, I DON'T...
ZARA WAS FAR TOO CAPTIVATED BY THE BEAUTY OF THE MYSTWOOD TO LISTEN CLOSELY TO LITEBODY...
...OR TO NOTICE MOVEMENT..
...OR HIDDEN MONSTERS!!

FACE-TO-FACE WITH A NIGHTMARE, ZARA COULD ONLY A GASP!
A GASP LOUD ENOUGH TO SEND LITEBODY BOLTING TOWARD HER
DON'T BE AFEARED, CHILD, IT'S JUST ONE O'THEM CLEAR OVES SNOOPIN' ABOUT, AN' PUT ME DOWN!
THEY CAN'T TOUCH US YA NEVER REALLY GET USED TO THE SNEAKS, THOUGH!

BEFORE LONG, ZARA WOULD TAKE HER FIRST STEPS INTO SOMEWHEN. . BUT, THAT NIGHT AGAIN, HER DREAMS WERE FILLED . VIVID DREAMS OF THE PAST. .
STARRY NIGHTS WHEN FIRST SHE MET HER PRINCE... 'TWAS A SWEET DREAM. BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, A HAUNTING AND BOTHERSOME DREAM... TOO CLOSE... ALMOST TOO REAL!


AT LAST... AT VERY LONG LAST.. THE PROMISED DAY CAME...
IT WAS TWILOMYST," AND AN ANXIOUS YOUNG PRINCESS WAITED . SINCE FIRST LIGHT ..
TOCK, THE DWELFIN TIMEKEEPER, WAS AT HIS POST, READY TO BRIEF ZARA...
...ANXIOUS, AFRAID, AND EXCITED--NEVER HAD SHE BEEN SO EXCITED.


NOT LONG, THE FIRST TIME... NOT LONG... AND DON'T REMOVE THE EARTHPOUCH FROM YOUR SKIN.. OR YOU'LL BE SEEN!
OH, ME..
OH, STOP YOUR MOTHERIN'... SHE'LL BE JUST FINE!
AND WE'RE TAKING THE TWILINGS AND DWOOF... SHE'LL BE JUST FINE...
"JUST FINE." SAID HARLEY.
SO WITH HARLEY ON ONE HAND, AND LITEBODY ON THE OTHER, THE TWILINGS ABOVE HER HEAD, AND THE DWOOF AT HER FEET...


ZARA TOOK HER FIRST STEP INTO SOMEWHEN
ARE WE OUT OF THE MYSTWOOD ?
NOT EXACTLY.
Huh?
THE MYSTWOOD IS RIGHT WHERE WE ARE .. JUST AS WHERE WE ARE IS RIGHT IN THE MYSTWOOD!
LITEBODY'S EXPLANATION MIGHT AS WELL HAVE GONE TO THE TREES, FOR ZARA'S THOUGHTS WERE ELSEWHERE...

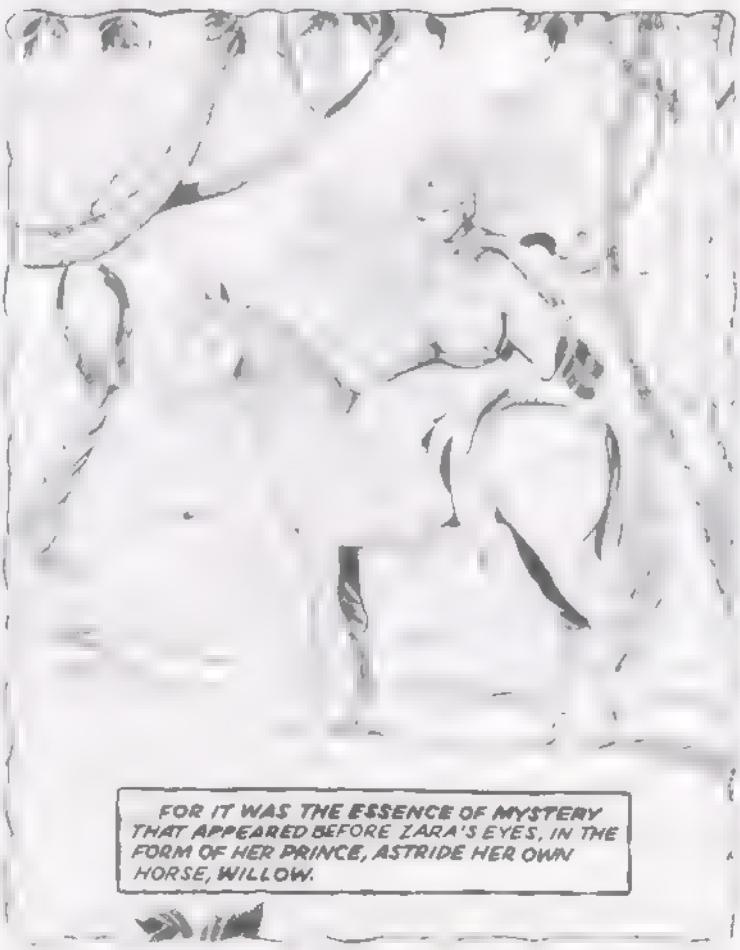
...ON A TALL, UNUSUAL FLOWER THAT BECKONED TO THE CURIOUS GIRL...
I KNOW I WAS TOLD NOT TO TOUCH, BUT HOW COULD A FLOWER...
.. AND SUCH A BEAUTIFUL FLOWER...
SHE REACHES... SHE TOUCHES .. ONLY TO BE REACHED, TOUCHED, AND GRABBED BACK!
KAWOOMP!

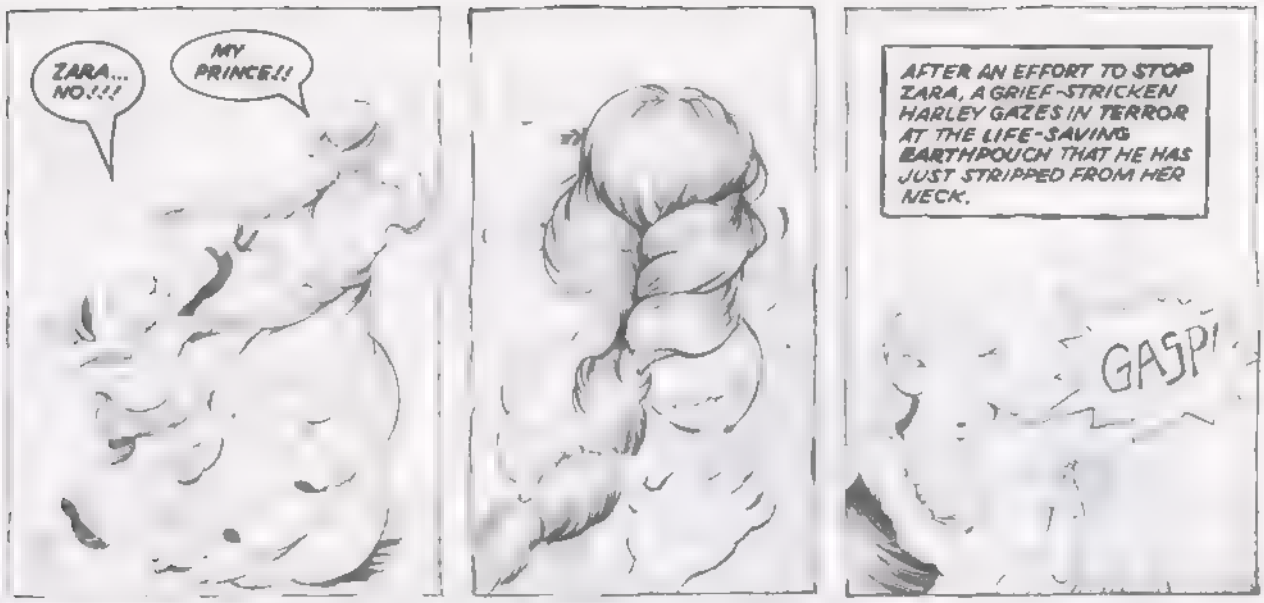
LOOK WHAT SHE'S DONE, HARLEY!
GO GET HER!
ZARA'S FIRST LESSON IN SOMEWHEN SEEMS SEVERE..
BUT SECONDS LATER, THE TWILINGS PRODUCE HER... FRAZZLED BUT UNDAMAGED.
YOU CAN'T ALWAYS TRUST YOUR EYES HERE! THERE ARE MANY WORLDS WITHIN THIS ONE... YOU CAN'T BE SURPRISED BY NOTHIN'! EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT HERE!
AS FAR AS WE KNOW, YOU'RE THE ONLY HUMAN TO VISIT HERE. THERE ARE A LOT OF HUMAN-LIKE CREATURES, THOUGH-- SO MAYBE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FIND SOME ANSWERS FOR US

THAT'S PROBABLY LONG ENOUGH FOR THE FIRST TRIP.
YEAH. TOCK IS PROBABLY PITCHIN' A FIT BY NOW!

NOW... TO GET BACK, YOU DO THIS JUST TAKE YOUR POUCH BETWEEN YOUR TWO FINGERS, AND...

THE LAST OF HARLEY'S INSTRUCTIONS WOULD REMAIN A MYSTERY...


FOR IT WAS THE ESSENCE OF MYSTERY THAT APPEARED BEFORE ZARA'S EYES, IN THE FORM OF HER PRINCE, ASTRIDE HER OWN HORSE, WILLOW.


ZARA... NO!!!
MY PRINCE!!
AFTER AN EFFORT TO STOP ZARA, A GRIEF-STRICKEN HARLEY GAZES IN TERROR AT THE LIFE-SAVING EARTHPOUCH THAT HE HAS JUST STRIPPED FROM HER NECK.
GASP!

WAS IT DREAM OR NIGHTMARE THAT ZARA SAW? REACHING DOWN TO STEAL HER AWAY ON HORSEBACK AND RIDE SWIFTLY INTO THE SKY AND OUT OF SIGHT... LEAVING TWO VERY HORRIFIED AND SADDENED DWELVES BEHIND HER.
To Be Continued...

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#2

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and **WOLPH**
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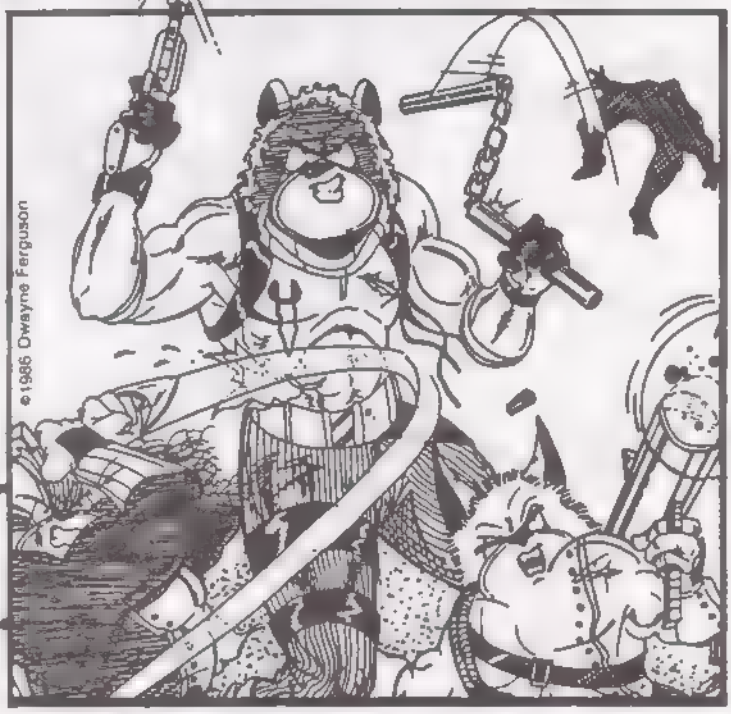

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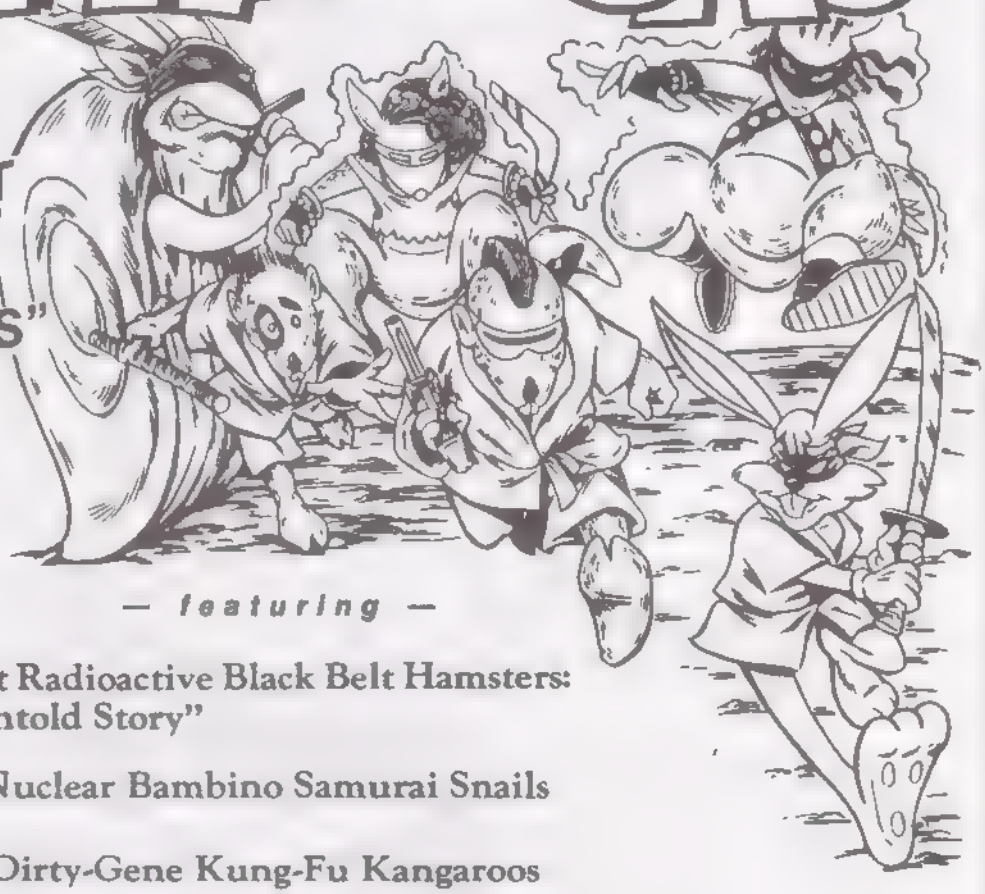

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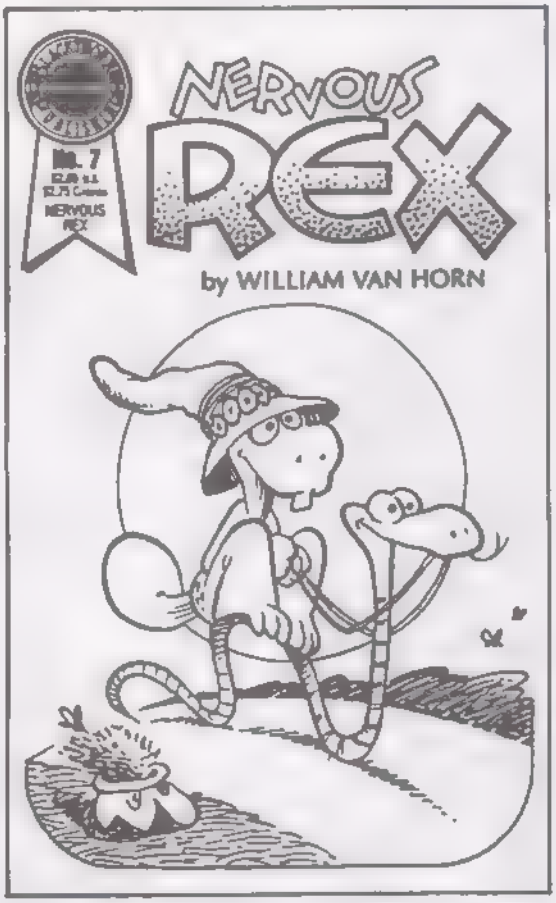

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GLOSSARY

ZARA: The Princess.

SOMEWHEN: A place in time beyond Somewhere; a space in time depending on individual perception. Dwelfin name for other dimension.

ETERNITREE: The oldest living thing on Earth. Dwelf legend says that it even survived the "Great Flood." A huge oak that stands on the edge of the Mystwood.

DWELF: A smallish human-like inhabitant of the Mystwood. A cross between a dwarf and an elf with the best characteristics of each. Physically larger than an elf with the strength of a dwarf.
Population: Less than 50.

CREPUSCULUS: The eldest and wisest dwelf.

CLEAR ONE: a 5th dimensional being that has the power to alter his structure and/or appearance at will.

EARTHPOUCH: A pouch worn around the neck of anyone travelling into Somewhen. It contains bark and soil from the Mystwood—Contact with the skin prevents absorbtion.

TWILING: A small and special faerie that has mastered the art of inter-dimensional travel. (Only a few remain).

TREEKS: The tree people of the Mystwood.

TWILOMYST: Dawn or twilight in the Mystwood. A peak time for inter-dimensional travel.

TOCK: The Dwelfin Timekeeper. His job is to measure the interval of dimensional travel at the point of entry; also a Dwelfin slang word that means "worrywart," *i.e.* "Don't be such a Tock."

DWOOF: A Dwelfin dog.

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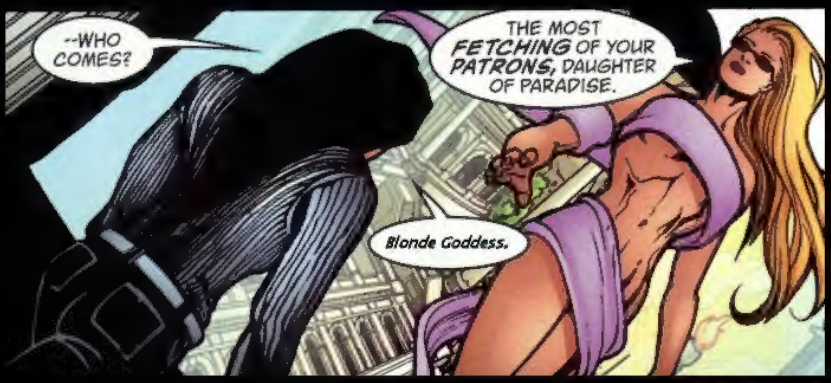

A Blonde Goddess scam.